

Ogun residents lament flooding as man drowns in canal



Tension had gripped residents of Ajegunle Ilo and Ilo-Otta Awela communities in Sango-Ota, Ogun State, after a man drowned in the canal.

Days after the incident, his body remains in the canal, face-down in murky water, prompting fresh cries for government intervention over the deteriorating canal and bridge infrastructure that has claimed many lives over the years.

The incident, according to residents and business owners, is not an isolated one. Multiple deaths have occurred at this same location, with school children, traders, and even vehicles plunging into the canal, especially during the rainy season.

Baale of Ajegunle Ilo community, Prince Abolaji Adeyemo, expressed deep frustration during an interview with our correspondent.

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“The canal separates Lagos State from Ogun State at the Toll gate. For 16 years, we’ve begged both Federal and state governments to fix it. It keeps expanding due to flooding. Houses, markets, and businesses are being washed away. People’s lives are at risk daily, especially children and passersby,” he said.

He described the recent drowning as one of many, noting that it only takes a downpour for disaster to strike.

“Whenever it rains, the water rises fast, and anyone caught around the canal can be swept away. We’ve lost pupils, meat sellers, and several others. The delay in removing bodies only increases the health risks, including cholera outbreaks,” Adeyemo warned.

One hotel near the canal has spent over ₦30 million to construct concrete slabs in a desperate attempt to shield the property from being swallowed by the widening canal. The hotel Manager, Mr. Richard Odakon, said their efforts were simply not enough.

"My boss values lives. He spent over ₦26 million to protect the hotel with temporary slabs. But the flood is so strong that it's already washing them off. If nothing is done, this place will collapse," he lamented.

Odakon added that the area has seen frequent accidents involving trucks and vehicles plunging into the canal during floods.

"This happens every week. It's become normal to hear that someone else has drowned or another vehicle is in the canal. It's heartbreaking," he said.

Residents say they've written letters, organized protests, and held meetings with local government officials and lawmakers. Yet, no lasting solution has come.

Chairman of the Peace Land Community Development Association, Mr. Rufus Ejimakinde said the community has spent its own money trying to provide temporary solutions.

"We built slabs ourselves, but when the government came to dredge the canal, they removed them and left without completing the work. The tractors only worked for 19 days and never returned. We've reached out to Senator Yayi to escalate the issue, but we've heard nothing back," he said.

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He added that even light rains cause deadly flooding, raising concerns about what will happen during the peak of the rainy season.

At the nearby meat market, the mood was one of frustration and helplessness. Ahmed Ololade, a butcher who has worked in the area for over 16 years, recounted how the market has shrunk significantly due to the encroaching flood.

"This place used to be full of traders. Now, the canal has taken over. Our colleague drowned two years ago, and we found his body after three days. We've spent almost ₦4 million on barricades, but it's not working. People are scared to come and buy meat," he said.

Chairperson of the Ajegunle Ilo Community Development Association,

Mrs. Dosunmu said despite several appeals to the Agbado-Okeodo Local Government and other relevant government agencies, nothing meaningful has been done.

"We even held a stakeholders meeting and were told to reapply for repairs because previous efforts weren't done properly. But time is running out. Schools will soon resume, and children will be forced to cross that deadly canal daily," she said with concern.

She also recounted how a community member's wife was swept away by the canal while trying to get home.

"How many deaths will it take for the government to act?" she asked.

A resident who abandoned his house due to fear of the flood, Mr. Ayo Samuel said the government's silence has been devastating.

"There is a government, but it feels like we're on our own. It's the people and private individuals trying to fix the canal, not the authorities. This is shameful," he said.

Samuel expressed worry for children who must cross from Ogun State into Lagos for school, noting that many stay back or get stranded whenever it rains.

As the body of the most recent drowning victim remains in the canal, community members are calling on the Federal Government, as well as the Ogun and Lagos State Governments, to urgently intervene and reconstruct

the damaged canal and bridge at the Sango-Ota toll gate.

Residents warn that if nothing is done, more lives will be lost.

“We are begging the government, for the umpteenth time, please come to our rescue,” said Baale Adeyemi.